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OR, THE

Full and Comprehe[illegible]

OF

CHRISTIAN REFE[illegible]

A

DISCOURS[illegible]

ON

LUKE, XXIV. [illegible]

Stayed in me, and for me. Ev[illegible]
He that cometh in the Name [illegible]
Spirit, may Light [illegible]

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CHANGE

DISCOURSE

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is a subject of the greatest grief and deepest humiliation, and what ought to make Christians to tremble; to consider how few of those that profess Christianity, have a distinct idea of their Duty, or a true conception of the Way to Heaven. Repentance, *as we are taught it in the Gospel, is the Method, whereby fallen Men are to be Saved; without it, we are assured, Men cannot enter into the Regions of Immortality and Bliss; without it God will certainly admit no Man into his Kingdom; without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord. Yet, if it be at all inquired into, it will appear by sad experience, that almost all Men have a wrong notion of that* Holiness, *or Christian* Repentance, *which is so indispensibly necessary. They make it amount to so little, that it dwindles away at last into nothing*

For they imagine, it may be wrought in an instant, at the last gasp. And whereas our Saviour declares, that, if we will be saved, we must keep the Commandments; the generality of those that name the Name of Christ, so conceive of Repentance, or take it in such a sense, as thereby to make the Commands of God of none effect, and make void the Obligation of a holy Life. Thus unstable and inconsiderate Men, pervert and corrupt the wholsomest Doctrines, and wrest the best things to their own Destruction. It is therefore highly Necessary, as we value the Souls of our Fellow-Creatures, and as we shall answer it to Almighty God, earnestly to endeavour, and to use all our might, to confute the so wonderfully prevailing Errour, and rectify, if possible, the most pernicious Mistakes of Men, in this weighty Matter. But to effect this great and good Work, it will undoubtedly be requisite, that all Hands, which are able to do any thing towards the procuring so inestimable an Advantage to the World, be diligently employed about it. It is incumbent on Christ's Ministers, to strive to set this important Subject in the greatest

light.

light. And it is the Duty of those who are able, to make it spread; that the Sun of Righteousness may shine on all. There is daily Occasion of writing popular Treatises on this Point. And those to whom God has committed the Goods of this World, should, if they will acquit themselves of their part, procure these Treatises for those who are less able to be at the charge of Books. We might hope to see Religion flourish, and Vertue abound in the World, if Men were thus agreed to further it to the best of their power. But those undoubtedly shall be held inexcusable, who come not heartily to the help of the Lord, *or who go carelesly and negligently about his Work. The Searcher of Hearts will render to all Men according to their Deeds, all Shifts and Evasions all Pleas and Pretences notwithstanding. Tis wonderful that Men cannot apprehend, they ought to joyn in so necessary an Undertaking, (all having their Souls alike to save,) and ought to take hold of the Opportunities which God puts into their hands, to assert the most essential truths of the Gospel, and to convince Christians*

f the Neceſſity of doing their Duty. The Writter of the following Paper has endeavoured, to give a right notion of Saving Repentance, *and to render it plain to all Capacities; and he has ſtudied brevity, that the Diſcourſe might be purchaſed at the cheaper rate: nevertheleſs he has omitted nothing that is neceſſary, to make Men form a true conception of that* Repentance, *which has the Promiſe of* Remiſſion of Sins.

Of

Of a Timely and Saving CHANGE, &c.

LUKE, 24. 47.

That Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name.

THE Context runs thus. *Jeſus ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day; and that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations.* That Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached *in his Name*; that is to ſay, ſhould be preached *by Commiſſion from him*; or that *he ſhould give Commiſſion* to an Order of Men to preach Repentance, *&c.* As all things that belong to the Admiralty, for inſtance, are done *in the Name* of the Admiral; in like manner, whatſoever relates to the Mediator's Kingdom is done *by the Authority* of the Savior

Saviour of the World, and is reckoned as done by himself, who is the Head, and Commander, or Chief Minister under God. Therefore, in the 2. Ch. of the Ep. to the *Ephes.* (at the 17. Verse,) *Christ* is said to have *preached to the Ephesians.* And the *Apostles* expressly assert, that they are *Ambassadours for Christ*, and that, in what they did, they acted *in Christ's stead.* (2 *Cor.* 5. 20.) So that when the *Apostles* preached Repentance and Remission of sins according to our Saviour's directions, it was the same thing as if that had been done by our *Saviour* himself, who had received of God the immediate Order of doing it, or causing it to be done.

Moreover, as it is seen in the Context, Christ had voluntarily undergone the violent Death of the Cross, to *seal* this Doctrine of his with his Blood, *That it was necessary to Repent in order to obtain Pardon, and that God would certainly forgive Men if they actually repented of their Sins*: And God had raised his Son the third Day from the Dead, to give to all the World the solemnest *Confirmation* possible of the truth of that which the Holy Jesus and his Ministers preached, and to *ascertain* Mankind that Christ preached not these things of himself, but was sent of God on this Errand. Whenever therefore Repentance

and

and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached by thoſe whom our Saviour employed to that purpoſe, it was not to be divulged merely as a Notion founded upon the Light of Nature, but as a Doctrine *aſſerted by Chriſt's Death and Reſurrection*. And this is more particularly the import of preaching this Doctrine *in his Name*.

The Light of Nature indeed intimated that without the Reformation of Sinners God would not be reconciled to them; and that tho He was not obliged to admit them to his moſt ſpecial favour upon their Repentance, yet the only wiſe courſe that Sinners could take was to humble themſelves before God, and, in a word, to repent, and to depend upon God for Pardon. But the Light of Nature, it ſeems, was not attended unto, but was (as it is ſtill to this day) generally diſregarded by Men. The generality of Men were prepoſſeſſed with this Notion, that in order to obtain forgiveneſs it was not ſufficient to return to God with an unfeigned Repentance. It could not be got out of their heads, that infinite and innumerable Expiations were abſolutely neceſſary; about which they were much at a loſs, for the fancy of Man when once ſet on work, has no bounds and finds not where to reſt. Howbeit

man

many were ſo fond as to imagine, that Sacrifices were capable, of their own nature, to appeaſe the incenſed Deity. And actually the greateſt part of Mankind relied upon theſe, and moſt commonly upon theſe alone, for their Reconciliation with God.

The generality of Men, having accuſtomed themſelves to be vicious, had readily entertained this Principle, that it was impoſſible to alter their Natures, and to live vertuouſly. They had even forgot many parts of Vertue; for they took not many of theſe to be any branches of Man's Duty. And even as for thoſe Duties which were moſt obvious, they ordinarily eluded them by many Evaſions. The generality of the World being thus corrupted, both in Practice and Principles, and the Danger being eminent that in a ſhort time the Depravation prevailing would have transformed all Men into Devils, God in his infinite Mercies ſent his Son to ſave us from our Sins. And thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and *that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name* among all Nations.

To Meditate further on this Text, we muſt do theſe two Things.

I. Con-

I. Conſider what that particularly implies, which was thus to be preached every where.

II. Obſerve ſome of the moſt conſiderable Inferences reſulting from what ſhall be ſaid on this ſubject.

I. *We are to conſider what that particularly implies, which our Saviour ſays in the Text was to be preached in his Name.* It is this; *That Repentance is neceſſary for, and will obtain Remiſſion of Sins.* This is the ſubject of the whole Goſpel. The Deſign of each Book of the New Teſtament in particular is to illuſtrate this, and put it in the greateſt light. Yet Chriſtians are not agreed about the Meaning thereof, but ſome take it in *one* ſenſe, and others in *another*, which in ſome reſpects do very much differ; ſo that thoſe *two* ſeveral Explications which are given of the Doctrine of our Text, and of the Subject and Intent of the Goſpel, do imply as it were *two* ſeveral Ways to Heaven. Howbeit, certainly, there can be but one Religion, or but one Way to be eternally Happy. Indeed Chriſtians may differ about a thouſand indifferent things, and yet make no eſſential Change in the true Religion. But if that which the Goſpel makes the

Condi-

Condition of Salvation, and the only Way to Bliss, be mis-interpreted and mis-understood; it is plain that this Errour is fundamental, that the Religion is altered, and another Gospel is set up; for then Men pretend that, that is the Way to Heaven, which is not the Way to Heaven; they teach one Method of being Saved, and the Gospel teacheth another. It is then of the greatest importance imaginable to every Man, to inform himself aright about this Matter. I shall, therefore, fairly represent the two Sentiments, and the Reasons and Arguments upon which they are built. This is a Subject that cannot be too carefully considered, and that ought to be put in a full light.

1. The *first Sentiment* is, that by *Repentance* here in the Text we are only to understand a deep *Sorrow for our Sins*, and a hearty *Purpose of Amendment*, which may be wrought *in an instant*, so that by this means Men, at any time, pass in a moment from a State of Condemnation to a *State of Salvation*. The *Reasons* of this Explication are as followeth.

(1.) A deep Sorrow for our Sins, together with a hearty Purpose of Amendment, *worketh a real Change* in us, and *ipso facto* renews, purifies and sanctifies our Nature;

Natures; ſo that, when ever we conceive a deep Sorrow for our Sins and frame a good Reſolution of doing better, tho it were but at our laſt moment, if it ſhould pleaſe God then to continue us in this World our Lives would be vertuous and holy, as much as they are capable to be here, and we would obey ſincerely all the Commands of the Goſpel. For this very reaſon, therefore, ſuch a particular Obedience is never the Condition of Salvation: It is only a Sign and Evidence of the Sincerity of our Reſolution of Amendment, and of our Sorrow for Sin; But this Sign and Evidence is no otherways neceſſary than for our own particular Satisfaction, and to give us a more certain Aſſurance of our being in the Way of Heaven. If at the laſt Gaſp, after a whole Life of Rebellion and Diſobedience, we conceived a deep Sorrow for our Sins and formed a hearty Reſolution of Amendment, (as, no doubt, we may do then as well as at any other time,) we ſhould not indeed have the ſatisfaction to be fully aſſured that our Sorrow and Reſolution are ſincere, dying before we have time to give our ſelves and the World indeniable proofs of it; nevertheleſs they may be as hearty and ſincere as they could be if they had been followed by a conſtant

course of Obedience during many Years; and, if they are actually hearty and sincere, we are as safe (tho perhaps we are not so fully ascertained of it) as if we had thus spent the greatest part of our Life and had given the greatest tokens possible of our Regeneration; for God has not need of such Marks or Signs, to see how things are; he knows our hearts tho we know them not our selves, and whenever we are truly changed he is infallibly certain we are renewed and fit for Salvation. We are truly changed, as has been said, whenever we are truly sorry for our Sins and do truly forsake our evil ways; and we may sincerely be so changed in a moment: To deny therefore that a deep Sorrow for our Sins and a firm Purpose of future Obedience in case of Opportunity suffice at any time to put us in the Way to Heaven, is to deny that *Repentance*, or Regeneration and Sanctification, has the Promise of *Remission of Sins*.

(2.) Our Sanctification in this World, at best, is very imperfect. *Our Righteousness*, in the sight of God, *is as filthy Rags*. It is then a great Vanity, to lay any stress on the holiest Life we can lead here, so at least as to esteem any such thing necessary. Do what we can, it is *impossible*

for us to get the *habit* of *living free from Sin.* Our Sorrow for Sin and Purpose of Amendment, that it may be real and saving, doth not imply that we are thereby become *impeccable*, and that we shall ever after be able to keep us from Sin or absolutely to abstain from sinning; for then no Man could be saved. For the most Righteous Man *falleth seven times in a day*, and *in many things we offend all.* The most Righteous Life then seems not to have any advantage over bare Sorrow for Sin and Purpose of Amendment; for the Excellency or the Praise and Vertue of a Righteous Life consisteth not in that such a Life is perfect or absolutely free from Sin, but in that it is sincere: If therefore our Sorrow for Sin and Purpose of Amendment be hearty and sincere, tho not followed with a holy Life or with any further continuance in this World, it is as excellent a thing and as praise-worthy as any thing that Men can do, and the intrinsic worth thereof is as great and is the same as that of the holiest Life, since it is Sincerity alone that is in either to be regarded, and God reckons every thing as done by us, which we really intend to do if we have the Opportunity or which we heartily desire we may do

(3.) The Grace of God worketh not at all times, or as it pleases Men, but has its seasons, in some sooner, in others later, as it seemeth best to God. For this reason indeed Men ought to be cautious that they let not slip any Opportunities of Grace and of doing their Duty, because it may be God will not put it in their power to do it another time. However, whenever Men are well disposed, Repent them heartily of their Sins, and actually form a firm and sincere Resolution of Amendment, they are in a state of Grace; and how late soever this be, it is a Season of Grace, as it appears by the blessed effect: Very credibly, if this happen at their latter end, this efficacious Grace was never afforded them before; but, supposing it had and the Men had power to resist it during the whole course of their Life, yet, if it present itself still and they take hold of it at last, they are then in a state of Grace and Salvation.

(4.) It appears evidently in Scripture, that that *Repentance*, to which the *Forgiveness of Sins* is annexed, and which consequently puts Men in a State of Salvation, is only such a Change as may be wrought in a moment, and which therefore consisteth in nothing else but a deep

Sorrow.

Sorrow for Sin and an affectionate Des
of returning to God. It is ſaid in the
of *Ezekiel* (v. 27.) that *when the wic*
man turneth away from his wickedneſs th
he has committed, he ſhall ſave his Soul aliv
even in that Moment that he forſake
his evil ways. Agreeably hereunto it
certain that when Infidels and Sinners, i
the primitive times of the Goſpel, wer
converted to Chriſtianity, their Conver
ſion was ordinarily wrought in a Mo
ment, and was commonly the effect of
Sermon, upon which they believed and
were baptized, that is, were admitted to
receive the Sign and Badge of the Son
of God, and where thereupon honoured
with the title of Saints. But wherein
could their Holineſs then conſiſt, ſaving
in a hearty Sorrow for their Sins, and a
firm Purpoſe of Amendment? The Thief
upon the Croſs in like manner, whoſe Re
pentance was accepted of, could do no
more than this.

(5.) To hold, in oppoſition to all this,
that ſuch a Repentance as is wrought in
a little time cannot be ſincere, or (how
ever) cannot ſuffice to obtain Forgive
neſs, is to reduce late Penitents to Deſ
peration, and abſolutely to diſcourage
them from making any attempts towards
their Reconciliation. But this is evident-

contrary to the nature of the Gospel, which offers Grace and Mercy, and supposes a Possibility of being Saved.

(6.) In fine, they who pretend that Sorrow for Sin, accompanied with a hearty Purpose of Amendment, is not that *Repentance* which has the Promise of eternal Life, and who assert that Men cannot fit themselves for Heaven in a moment, have no certain and exact notion of their own Sentiment. They cannot specify what it is that will suffice for Salvation, or how long time is necessary to be spent in the practice of Religion to qualify Men for the *Remission of Sins*. It remains therefore, according to these Reasonings, that there is no other System of *Repentance*, than that which makes it consist in Sorrow for Sin, and Purpose of Amendment. Thus we have seen the Explication which *some* Men give of our Text. They believe that our Saviour's intent was, as if he had thus expressed himself: „ It behoved Christ „ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the „ third day, and that this Gospel should „ be preached in his Name among all „ Nations, that whenever Men are Sor„ ry for their Sins, and heartily purpose „ and resolve to do better, all their Sins „ shall be forgiven them, and they shall

„ be

„ be saved. “ This is the *first* Interpretation of this most weighty Passage. But there are some, who take it in *another* sense, as we shall now proceed to shew.

2. The *second Sentiment* is, that by *Saving Repentance* we are not only to understand a deep Sorrow for our Sins and a hearty Resolution of Amendment, but even the *overcoming of all sinful Habits* and the actual *contracting the Habit or Disposition of universal Obedience* to the several Commands of the Gospel; all which cannot ordinarily be performed in a little time. The *Reasons* of which Sentiment, are these following.

(1.) Seeing one Text of Scripture is to be explained by, and not to be understood so as to contradict, another, we cannot suppose that *Saving Repentance* may be wrought *in a moment*, and consists only in Sorrow for Sin and a good Resolution; for it is very plain and very express in Scripture, that other things besides Sorrow for Sin and a good Resolution are absolutely required of us as the necessary Condition of our being saved, even *the rooting out of every Habit of Sin*, and *the contracting the Habits of Virtue*. For Men have rooted out the Habit of Sin, when they are no longer denominable thereby: and it is expressly declared,

red, that whoſoever are denominable by any Sin, are not in a ſtate of Salvation. 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, and 10. *The unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards,* nor any the like. *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, and 21. *The Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt: Of the which I tell you, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Therefore, in order to be in a ſtate of Salvation, forſaking every Sin we muſt *put off the old Man*, that is to ſay every evil Habit, that we may no longer be denominable thereby. *Epheſ.* 4. 22. And not only ſo, but we muſt alſo *put on the New Man*, that is the oppoſite good Habits. *Epheſ.* 4. 24. All which is not done in a trice, or all of a ſudden.

Let it be ſeriouſly conſidered; is it ever known that any Men, that are addicted to many evil Cuſtoms, do in a moment diſpoſſeſs themſelves of all their corrupt Habits, and in an inſtant learn to practiſe whatſoever the Goſpel enjoyns, and contract an affection and diſpoſition to every Vertue and every Chriſtian Duty, to which they were perfect ſtrangers, and againſt which they had a mighty averſion, but a minute before? Either then there is a great difference

betwixt

betwixt actually doing this, or only grieving for Sin in general and barely taking a good Reſolution; or elſe, if theſe things do not differ, there muſt be ſome conſiderable time neceſſary, together with many extraordinary Reflexions and extraordinary Strivings, to produce in a ſtubborn Sinner this hearty Sorrow for having offended God and this ſincere Love of Vertue, and to fix him to that almighty Reſolution, which is equivalent to a habit, and which gives a denomination.

It is indeed certain that there goes a great deal more to the making of a good Reſolution, than Men commonly are aware of. There's nothing more ordinary than for Men, upon the conſideration of the imminent Danger of Sin, to wiſh, not only that they had never ſinned, but that they ſhould never ſin again. And this preſent Wiſh of theirs, founded on that conſideration, they take for a Reſolution, and a good and firm Reſolution. And 'tis wonderful how Men, in a Matter of ſuch vaſt importance as concerns eternal Life and Death, ſeek to delude themſelves, and put on a face of Religion. But then as the Danger goes out of ſight, the Maſk falls off; they ſhew there's nothing in them that inclines to ſtrict Piety and

Vertue,

Vertue, they find they never actually intended to undertake those things in good earnest, which yet they could perhaps wish they were habituated to do. But there's a very great difference betwixt wishing a thing, and resolving it or actually purposing to use the fit Means to attain it. The cowardlyest Souldier that is, may very heartily wish for the Victory, tho himself runs away from the Enemy. A most lazy wretch may inordinately wish to be rich, tho he will do nothing to enrich himself. Thus a Sinner, under a great fright at the thoughts of Hell, may wish he were free from his Sins, tho he never the more actually intends (if his heart were searched to the bottom) to mortify his Lusts, or constantly to deny his Appetites, and resist and curb his Passions. Yet the most pressing is the Fright and Danger, and consequently the heartiest the Wish, (for it is natural to wish what is most dreadful the farthest from us,) the Man is so vain as thereupon the most strongly to imagine that he has formed a pious Resolution, and that upon that account he is in a very good state, and nothing but the Event can undeceive him, which fails not to happen, for bare *Wishes* never effect a Change in a Man.

Nor

Nor indeed does a bare *Reſolution* do ſo, at leaſt it doth not make a ſettled and univerſal Change, ſo as *ipſo facto* to root out all the Habits of Sin, and implant the Habits of Vertue. Many Men, as we have ſeen, do ſhamefully deceive themſelves, lightly imagining they have taken up a firm Reſolution, when they have done no ſuch thing. But, on the other hand, thoſe as we ſhall now obſerve are no leſs miſerably deluded, who are confident that a hearty *Reſolution* works a ſufficient Change in them, ſanctifies their Nature, and qualifies them for Salvation. Tis as if one reckoned his fortune already made, upon his taking a Reſolution of purſuing conſtantly thoſe Meaſures which are the fitteſt to acquire Wealth. Or as if a Coward preſumed that he is all of a ſudden become a moſt valiant Perſon, becauſe he has formed a ſtrong Reſolution of being Couragious. Thus then *the purpoſing to amend* implies no more than *the having at that moment a deſign to eſſay it*; but a Reſolution doth not in an inſtant effect the thing purpoſed. It do's not preſently follow even from the encountring of the Difficulties that we meet with in our Race during this Life, and moſt particularly when we begin to learn to acquit our ſelves

of

of our Duty, and from our resisting then the Temptations, and obeying the Commands of the Gospel, that our Nature is already sanctified; it follows only that we are undertaking it, that we are about that Work, that we are actually purifying our Nature, rooting out some evil Habits and settling in us a Habit and Disposition of Obedience, just as we discharge our several Duties. This is a great deal more than a bare *good Resolution*; and yet this does not excuse us from employing, as well and as carefully as we can, the Opportunities of Grace, and the precious Moments of our Time, which God has alloted us for the working our Salvation.

Let it be considered. We may form a very good, a very hearty and strong Resolution. We may rightly observe, that it is a base thing to offend God, and that Sin is a most foolish and unreasonable thing, most odious and mischievous. Thereupon we may wisely conclude, that we must bid adieu to Sin and part with our dearest Lusts; and we may heartily purpose to abstain from sinning as much as we can for the future. But what doth all this amount to, as yet? Even, God knows, but to a very litle. For there is an infinite difference betwixt

this designing, and actual doing. We perceive indeed in some measure the Reasons of our Duty. But, without putting, in a good degree, our Resolution in execution, we cannot overcome that bias which inclines us to evil. And yet it must be overcome, that our Nature be purified. We Resolve easily, because we do not weigh the Difficulties of the thing, and the Oppositions in our Nature, and perhaps we are very imperfectly acquainted with the several Parts of our indispensible Duty, because we have never used our selves duly to consider it. But our Saviour tells us, Men may not only *Resolve* well, but even *Strive*, which is more, and yet fall short of their Aim. (*Luk.* 13. 24.) Men may *begin* well, (*Gal.* 3, 3,) and even *run* on, proceed *well*, (*Gal.* 5, 7,) but it does not follow, that they are yet settled and established in Goodness, Vertue, and Obedience. This is the Work of Salvation; and surely it is a great and considerable Work.

The Apostle St. *Peter* puts this out of all doubt. He speaks to Men that had embraced Christianity, and who undoubtedly had taken many good Resolutions. And here is what he tells them, at the 5th and following Verses of the first

Chapter of his ſecond Epiſtle. *Giving all diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godlineſs; and to Godlineſs, Brotherly-kindneſs; and to Brotherly-kindneſs, Charity: For he that lacketh theſe things, is blind.* He ſuppoſes they might lack many of theſe things, notwithſtanding even the ſolemneſt Reſolution formed at their Baptiſm; and yet he profeſſeth, that the want of any of theſe things is utterly undoing, and damnable: It is then very plain, that Sorrow for Sin joyned with a good Reſolution is not all, that the Goſpel indiſpenſibly requires of us in order to our being Saved. It requires of us, in a word, the putting on every Grace and Vertue, as well as the forſaking every Sin. And, I pray, is this done *in a Moment?* If really it were ſo, what great need would there be, to be ſo urgent with Men, to *work out their Salvation with fear and trembling?* Why, this may be done at any time, and in a very litle time, in a minute, in an inſtant.

Give all diligence, ſays the Apoſtle; which is as if he had ſaid: „ You have „ a great and moſt weighty Work incumbent on you, and your Life is „ both

„ both ſhort and uncertain. Loſe then
„ no time, if you be wiſe. Set your
„ ſelves forthwith to your Task, and
„ attend to it with Conſtancy and Per-
„ ſeverance. Meditate conſtantly on all
„ the Parts of your Duty, and foreſee
„ the Difficulties and Obſtacles you
„ may meet with; prepare you ſelves
„ for them, and arm your ſelves againſt
„ them; and not only ſo, but at the
„ ſame time make all the haſte poſſible
„ to practiſe the ſeveral Vertues of
„ Religion; you have not only to be
„ Sorry for your Sins, and to Reſolve
„ well, but you are to root out all ill
„ Habits and add to your Faith Holi-
„ neſs of Life, Knowledge, Tempe-
„ rance, Patience, and the like; how
„ carefully then ought you to think of
„ theſe things, and be intent on the
„ means to attain to them! how fer-
„ vent and importunate ſhould you be
„ in your Supplications to God for his
„ Aſſiſtance! what mighty diligence,
„ my Brethren, muſt we uſe, to ſave
„ our Souls!

St. *John*, St. *Paul*, and St. *James* do likewiſe teſtify, that we muſt *be perfect and intire, wanting nothing*; (*Jam.* 1, 4;) that we muſt *be without blemiſh, or ſpot or any ſuch thing*; (*Epheſ.* 5, 27;) and

hat, in the Heavenly Jeruſalem, *there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth.* (*Revel.* 21. 27.) Now it is plain, our Nature is not *thus purified* in a moment; and we are not ſo eaſily *furniſhed with all Perfections*, as to be ſaid *to want nothing*. It is then evident what is to be anſwered, to thoſe who make this Queſtion: „ What if Men were „ really changed on a ſudden, in a good „ fit of Devotion; are not they true „ Penitents, and therefore qualified for „ Salvation? “ To this we muſt ſay; Men may thus *begin* their Converſion, and this *beginning* may be to ſome purpoſe in time, if it be followed with a rooting out of every evil Habit, and a contracting a real Diſpoſition to Univerſal Obedience. But every evil Habit is not rooted out, nor a real Diſpoſition to Univerſal Obedience contracted, nor conſequently a Man really changed, *on a ſudden, by a bare good Reſolution.* Where there is then only a *Reſolution*, there is not that *actual Change*, or Regeneration and Sanctification, which, according to many expreſs Paſſages of Scripture, muſt be underſtood to be included in a *true* or a *Saving Repentance.* And thus it appears, that Sorrow for Sin, tho joyned with a Reſolution

tion of Amendment, is not all that is required in order to be Saved. This is the first Argument.

(2.) The Scripture shews expressly in other Places, that evil Habits are not rooted out and that all Christian Vertues are not acquired in a Moment, and that therefore Sorrow for Sin and a good Resolution will not avail to Salvation: For the Scripture is express, that Men shall be *judged and rewarded according to their Works.* (*Matt.* 16. 27. *Revel.* 20. 12, 13.) It is declared, that God will render to every Man according to his Deeds; and will bestow Eternal Life only on them *who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality.* (*Rom.* 2. 6, 7.) We are told, that *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, teaches us to deny Ungodliness and Wordly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World.* (*Tit.* 2. 11, 12.) And, in fine, agreeably to all this, we are bid to *pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.* (1 *Pet.* 1. 17.) Now if it be necessary to pass a considerable time of our sojourning here in the fear of God, then surely our Salvation is not wrought in a moment. If the Grace of God teaches us to live Vertuously in this pre-

ſent World, then it doth not barely teach us to be ſorry for our Sins and to form a good Reſolution. If the being ſorry for our Sins and the forming a good Reſolution were ſufficient to Salvation, it could not truly be ſaid, that God will beſtow Eternal Life only on them who ſeek it by patient continuance in well doing, or that God will judge all Men according to their Works; but it muſt then be ſaid, that God will reward all Men according to their Reſolutions and their ſorrowing or not ſorrowing for Sin, and will beſtow Eternal Life on them who are ſorry for their Sins and who form a good Reſolution. Can in truth the Rewarding Men for a good Reſolution, be ſaid to be the Rewarding them *according to their Works?* When our Saviour had inſtructed us of the ſeveral Duties of Chriſtianity and of the Precepts of the Everlaſting Goſpel in his Sermon upon the Mount, he concludes all with this Saying; (*Matt.* 7, 26,) *Every one that heareth theſe things, and doth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh Man, which built his houſe upon the Sand.* Now in good earneſt can a Man who only takes a good Reſolution, when he has had the time and opportunities of diſcharging

charging his Duty and living in the Obedience of God's Commands, be said to *have done those things which Christ enjoyns us in his Sermon, or requires of us in any other part of his Gospel?* This is the second Argument.

(3.) The Way to be Saved is represented in Scripture as very difficult, and encompassed with many obstacles. *Matt.* 7. 14. *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life; and few there be that find it.* This is enough to make the generality of Men to *tremble*, like *Felix*, *Act*, 24. 25. Every Man is sensible, that to live habitually, in the course of this Life, in the exercise of the Christian Graces and Vertues, is a very considerable Task. But to form a good Resolution, cannot be thought such a hard piece of Work, as to affright Sinners. For there is no Sinner but reckons to bid adieu to his Sins, and form a good Resolution, sometime or other. The truth is that a *good Resolution* is not what many Men imagine, nor so light a thing or so very easy a matter as they suppose. Yet, after all, it is a mighty easy thing, in comparison of *doing* what the Gospel enjoyns; and it is not so hard a Labour, as therefore to represent *the Rea-*

to *Heaven* as a *ſtrait Gate* and a *narrow Way*. But there is an exceeding great Difficulty, in ſubduing our Luſts, in overcoming our Paſſions, in denying inordinate Appetites, in reſiſting violent Temptations, in watching even over our Thoughts and our Words, and in regulating our Actions in the courſe of this Life according to the Commands of the Goſpel.

(4.) In fine, God declares expreſly, in ſeveral Places of Scripture, that it will not avail to our Salvation to *cry* unto him, if we *practiſe* not his will; (*Matth.* 7, 21:) That if we refuſe to hearken to him when he calls, then we may call upon him when it ſhall be too late, and when he *will not hear* us; (*Prov.* 1, 28:) And that we muſt look diligently leſt we fail of the Grace of God, ſeeing we read of ſome who were rejected when they ſued for that which they had before deſpiſed, and who *found no place of Repentance thô they ſought it carefully with tears.* (*Heb.* 12. 17.) The Work of Salvation then may not be wrought in an inſtant or at any time, and conſiſts not merely in Sorrow for Sin and a Purpoſe of Amendment.

For thô Men may in an inſtant or at any time be ſorry for their Sins and purpoſe

purpoſe to amend, yet it appears their Sorrow for Sin and Purpoſe of Amendment is ineffectual, when they have thrown away the Opportunities of working their Salvation. Theſe Arguments ſeem abundantly ſufficient. It remains only to anſwer the *Objections* that are made againſt *this* Sentiment.

1. *Objection.* It is objected, in the firſt place, that, *thô we do not lead a holy Life, yet God ſees whether or no we would do ſo, and he accepts the Will for the Deed.* To this, the Anſwer is. If Men have neglected to lead a holy Life when they had the Light and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel, or when it was their own fault if they enjoyed not thoſe ineſtimable Advantages, God *reckons them to be unworthy of Heaven*; and he accepts the Will for the Deed *only when Men had not the Opportunities to put their good Intentions in execution, and have ſo improved the Opportunities which were put into their hands as to have habituated themſelves in the Chriſtian practice of their Duty, and in ſome meaſure to deſerve this glorious Commendation of their Lord,* „ Well done „ thou good and faithful Servant. “ For we have ſeen, God has declared he will *Reward all Men according to their Works.* It is then evident, God has not

ſo

ſo much regard to what Men will do, as to what they do. Otherwiſe it might be ſaid, that there would have been no need to have ſent Men into this World, if knowing what they would have done it had been fit to diſpoſe of them eternally according to that knowledge.

2. *Objection.* Secondly it is objected, that *our Righteouſneſs in this World is ſo imperfect, that it exceeds not bare Sorrow for Sin, and a hearty Reſolution of Amendment.* I anſwer. This is a moſt pernicious Errour. The Chriſtian Righteouſneſs, or Evangelical Perfection, which is neceſſary to Salvation, conſiſts in being freed from the Habit of every Sin, and being uſed and habituated to practiſe diligently and conſtantly the Commands of the Goſpel; that is, in a word, the being ſettled and eſtabliſhed in the Ways of Piety and Vertue. This is a great deal more than barely Sorrowing for Sin, and forming a Reſolution of Amendment.

It is true we are not abſolutely *impeccable* in this World; but yet *whoſoever is a Child of God doth not commit Sin,* (1 *John*, 3, 9,) lieth under no evil Habits, is ſubject to no Iniquity, and cannot be denominated by any Vice. It

is no where ſaid, that a Righteous Man falleth into Sin ſeven times in a day.

A Righteous Man may poſſibly fail ſometimes, and in many things we offend all, by Infirmity and Surprize, in leſſer Matters: But there's a vaſt difference betwixt failing thus in a manner unavoidably, and committing heighnous and wilful Sins. When a Man committeth heighnous and wilful Sins, he is not a Righteous Man. We are not in a ſtate of Salvation, till we have overcome, as has been ſaid, the Habit of every Sin. As for the *Legal* Righteouſneſs, that was made by the *corrupt* Jews to conſiſt in *Formalities*, that was of no value, and was no better than vile Hypocriſie.

3. *Objection.* It is objected, thirdly, that *the Grace of God, without which we can do nothing, aſſiſteth not Men at all times.* I anſwer. God is wanting to none but thoſe, who are wanting to themſelves in thoſe things which God has enabled them to do. For God *hateth all Workers of Iniquity*; (*Pſ.* 5. 5.) he *loveth Righteouſneſs, and hateth Wickedneſs*: (*Pſ.* 45. 7.) It is therefore only Mens fault when they Sin; otherwiſe they were excuſable, and could not

not justly be found fault with. On the other hand, they could deserve no Praise, if they were wholly acted by an external power, or by an irresistible force.

4. *Objection.* In the fourth place, *the 27. Verse of the 18. of Ezekiel* is objected, it being pretended that the taking a Resolution is the same thing with the turning away from all Sin, to which the Promise of Salvation is made. But the foregoing Arguments shew the weakness of this pretence. And indeed it is not only said in *Ezekiel*, he that turneth away from his wickedness shall save his Soul alive; but *he that turneth away from all his transgressions, and doth that which is lawful and right, and keepeth all God's Statuts*, that is to say, (as appears by the aforesaid Arguments,) he that rooteth out the habit of all Sins, and that useth himself to an habitual and universal Obedience, he shall live. This is not a business that is dispatched in an instant.

5. *Objection.* But then *the State of Proselytes, at their embracing of Christianity, upon which they are baptized*, is objected in the next place. To this, the Answer is. Proselytes do then all they are able, take hold of the Grace that is offered

offered them, and do not throw away the Opportunity that is put into their hands; they are therefore in the way of Salvation; and, whatever happens, God can provide them the Means to exerciſe their Vertue as far as is requiſite. Thoſe whom the Apoſtles wrote to, how imperfect ſoever then their ſtate ſeemed as yet to be, were termed *Saints*, upon theſe accounts; Becauſe not only they were extraordinarily called to be univerſally vertuous and holy, but chiefly becauſe they were actually in the Way, and could not fail, to become ſuch, if they diligently followed the Directions of the Goſpel, as they were for the moſt part endeavouring, and as they had ſolemny engaged themſelves to do.

6. *Objection.* Sixthly, *the Caſe of the Thief upon the Croſs* is likewiſe objected. But the ſame that we have juſt now obſerved concerning the ſtate of Proſelytes at their firſt hearing and embracing of the Goſpel, is to be in ſome meaſure applied here. And we deny not but that God may do Miracles, or extraordinary things, when he pleaſes.

7. *Objection.* Seventhly, it is objected, that *this Doctrine is extremely ſevere and terrible to thoſe who have deferred their*

Repentance to their Death-bed. I answer. This makes not our Sentiment the less true, if it be founded upon Scripture, as we have shewn it is. Our Lord Jesus Christ promises Salvation, only to them who observe the Conditions of the Gospel. Howbeit, the wisest course that late Penitents can take, is certainly to do all the good they can, not knowing what that may produce.

8. *Objection.* Lastly, it is objected *we cannot assign exactly what time is necessary, to be spent in the practice of Religion, to qualify Men for Salvation.* We answer. There is no necessity to determine this, nor is it possible to do it, by reason that some make a greater progress than others, and the Opportunities of improvement do not at all times equally present themselves. We are diligently to work out our Salvation, with fear and trembling; and *so much time is necessary*, as will suffice, to dispossess us of all evil Habits, to accustom us to universal Obedience, and settle us in the ways of Vertue and Piety, that we may be adorned with all the Graces that are requisite to fit us for the Life and Society of Heaven.

The *Roman Catholicks* themselves, who are reckoned to have but imperfect Notions

tions concerning *Repentance*, ſome of their Tenets ſeeming to be in a great meaſure deſtructive of the Nature and Eſſence thereof, yet often ſeem to be aware of, or not to be very far from the Truth in this weighty Matter, as may be ſeen, for inſtance, in the following Paſſage of the Gentlemen of *Port-Royal*, concerning this ſubject, to this effect.

„ But thô the ſick Perſon ſhould have „ in that condition all the preſence of „ mind that can be wiſhed; doth he „ think he ought to be confident of „ the validity of thoſe pretended Marks „ of Converſion, which precede his „ Death but of a ſhort time? That is „ not the judgement which the Church „ has ever made of that matter. On the „ contrary, ſhe has always held them „ as ſuſpectable, and has endeavoured „ to perſuade all her Children not to „ truſt to them. She has required a „ gain of thoſe to do Pennance, whom „ ſhe had abſolved in that condition „ as if they were not reconciled with „ God and the Church, reckoning al„moſt for nothing all they had done „ in their Sickneſs. Divers reaſons „ might be brought for this; but I ſhall „ content my ſelf here to alledge one

„ which has already been made uſe of
„ in another Treatiſe.

„ It is, that ordinarily, or naturally,
„ and in the common method of things
„ and the uſual Way of Providence,
„ Men change not their Object and End
„ of a ſudden or all at once. Indeed
„ a Man may change in a moment his
„ outward acts. But Love, which holds
„ the chief place in the heart, ſeldome
„ changes in a moment. That it may
„ change, it is ordinarily neceſſary that
„ it weaken by little and little, and
„ that another Affection take its room
„ by various Steps and many Progreſ-
„ ſions. Thus Mens Paſſions are chan-
„ ged; and God ordinarily worketh in
„ the ſame manner, not being willing
„ that the Operations of his Grace be
„ ſenſibly diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of
„ Nature. He begins by ſhaking the
„ heart by Fear and Terror, before he
„ affects it with his Love; and he eſ-
„ ſays often for a great while to inſtill
„ ſome beginnings of divine Love into
„ it, before he maſters it by a pre-
„ vailing Love, which turns the heart
„ towards God as towards its laſt end,
„ and which delivers it from the Sla-
„ very of the Love of the Creatures.
„ Seeing therefore the Converſion of

„ dying

„ dying Sinners cannot paſs by theſe
„ ſteps, it would be miraculous if it
„ were real; that it may be ſo, God
„ muſt act in an extraordinary way,
„ and do what he has not promiſed,
„ and what he has in the Goſpel given
„ Men no warrant to expect. Howbe-
„ it, the Church doth not abſolutely
„ deſpair of ſuch a Miracle; and there-
„ fore ſhe grants the Sacraments to the
„ dying Penitents: but at the ſame
„ time ſhe extremely fears that the
„ Diſpoſitions which appear in them in
„ that condition, are *only ſome weak be-*
„ *ginnings* either of Fear, or Love of
„ God, which do not ſuffice to make
„ up a Saving Repentance or a real
„ Converſion. " [*Eſſais de Morale.* 4. *Vol.* 1 *Trait. Liv.* 1. *De la Mort. Chap.* 5. *P.* 25, 26.]

Now it is plain, this is far from implying, that true Repentance is an eaſy Work, that may be performed in a little time, and that conſiſts only in Sorrow for Sin and a ſudden Purpoſe of Amendment. Theſe Gentlemen eſteem, that a religious Change is not ſo ſoon made; and that *the beginnings* of the Love of God, which come *ſo late* and commence upon a Death-bed, are *weak* and *inſufficient* things, which come very

ort of the Sanctification that the Gos-
el requires. They intimate then there-
y, that the Goſpel-Regeneration con-
ſts in diveſting our ſelves of every evil
abit, and contracting the contrary
ood Habits, a Work that requires
uch ſtriving, many repeated Endea-
ours, and a patient continuance in well-
oing.

II. From all that has been ſaid, we
all draw the following *Inferences.*

Firſt, we may infer *what is the ſafeſt*,
s well as what is the trueſt of the *two*
entiments we have ſpecified with their
eaſons and Arguments. Suppoſing that
he *firſt* were the true Sentiment; yet
hat harm doth the *ſecond?* It hinders
ot Men from doing what they can do,
hô it never ſo much humble or deject
roſs and preſumptuous Sinners, who
ave ſpent their whole Life in an evil
ourſe. No body tells them that they
ught not to Sorrow for their Sins,
nd form the beſt Reſolutions they are
ble. Tis well for them, if that pro-
uces ſo good an effect as to procure
heir Salvation. But do we give them
ny poſitive Encouragement? As much,
ſay, as was given to the *Ninivites.*

It

It may be, God will allow them time and means to Repent, and will ſhew them ſome Mercy. However, certainly, as we ſaid, the only wiſe Method to be here taken is with all haſte poſſible to do the moſt good they can. Our Sentiment then is really ſubject to no Inconvenience, except you will ſay it is apt to affright ſome Perſons a little too much, and fit to make Men more vertuous, and ſooner and longer good than they need.

But, what if the *contrary* Sentiment be falſe? What if mere Sorrow for Sin and a bare Purpoſe of Amendment, together with the crying, *Lord, Lord*, do not ſuffice in order to be ſaved? then ſurely *this* is an Errour, that is moſt pernicious and damnable.

Secondly, we may infer from what has been ſaid, that if we will be wiſe we muſt *loſe no Occaſion* to diſuſe our ſelves from any thing that is evil, we muſt neglect no Opportunity to learn and accuſtome our ſelves to do what God commands us, we muſt take hold of the Offers of Grace and make a good uſe of our time; in a word, (to conclude,) we muſt conſtantly think of God's Commandments to imprint them in our hearts, and make them the Prin-

ciple

ciple of our Life, we must constantly watch against our Passions, and implore God's Mercies, humbly beseeching him to assist us continually in the Work of our Salvation. Which God Almighty, in his infinite Compassions grant to us all, thrô Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.

FINIS.

THEOLOGICAL PAPERS AND DISCOURSES.

A Practical Diſcourſe concerning Repentance, and the Nature of the Chriſtian Religion.
The Everlaſting Goſpel.
The Habit of Vertue and Obedience, required by the Goſpel, to qualify Men for Salvation.
Of a Timely and Saving Change; or the Full and Comprehenſive Notion of Chriſtian Repentance.
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